

Bureau of Prisons, Justice

§ 541.15

[53 FR 197, Jan. 5, 1988, as amended at 53 FR 40686, Oct. 17, 1988; 54 FR 38987, Sept. 22, 1989; 54 FR 39095, Sept. 22, 1989; 58 FR 39095, July 21, 1993; 62 FR 50788, Sept. 26, 1997; 65 FR 59726, Oct. 6, 2000; 67 FR 77428, Dec. 18, 2002]

§ 541.14 Incident report and investigation.

(a) *Incident report.* The Bureau of Prisons encourages informal resolution (requiring consent of both parties) of incidents involving violations of Bureau regulations. However, when staff witnesses or has a reasonable belief that a violation of Bureau regulations has been committed by an inmate, and when staff considers informal resolution of the incident inappropriate or unsuccessful, staff shall prepare an Incident Report and promptly forward it to the appropriate Lieutenant. Except for prohibited acts in the Greatest or High Severity Category, the Lieutenant may informally dispose of the Incident Report or forward the Incident Report for investigation consistent with this section. The Lieutenant shall expunge the inmate's file of the Incident Report if informal resolution is accomplished. Only the DHO may make a final disposition on a prohibited act in the Greatest Severity Category or on a prohibited act in the High Category (when the High Category prohibited act has been committed by a VCCLEA inmate rated as violent or by a PLRA inmate).

(b) *Investigation.* Staff shall conduct the investigation promptly unless circumstances beyond the control of the investigator intervene.

(1) When it appears likely that the incident may be the subject of criminal prosecution, the investigating officer shall suspend the investigation, and staff may not question the inmate until the Federal Bureau of Investigation or other investigative agency interviews have been completed or until the agency responsible for the criminal investigation advises that staff questioning may occur.

(2) The inmate may receive a copy of the Incident Report prior to being seen by the investigating agency. The investigating officer (Bureau of Prisons) shall give the inmate a copy of the Incident Report at the beginning of the investigation, unless there is good cause for delivery at a later date, such

as absence of the inmate from the institution or a medical condition which argues against delivery. If the investigation is delayed for any reason, any employee may deliver the charge(s) to the inmate. The staff member shall note the date and time the inmate received a copy of the Incident Report. The investigator shall also read the charge(s) to the inmate and ask for the inmate's statement concerning the incident unless it appears likely that the incident may be the subject of criminal prosecution. The investigator shall advise the inmate of the right to remain silent at all stages of the disciplinary process but that the inmate's silence may be used to draw an adverse inference against the inmate at any stage of the institutional disciplinary process. The investigator shall also inform the inmate that the inmate's silence alone may not be used to support a finding that the inmate has committed a prohibited act. The investigator shall then thoroughly investigate the incident. The investigator shall record all steps and actions taken on the Incident Report and forward all relevant material to the staff holding the initial hearing. The inmate does not receive a copy of the investigation. However, if the case is ultimately forwarded to the Discipline Hearing Officer, the DHO shall give a copy of the investigation and other relevant materials to the inmate's staff representative for use in presentation on the inmate's behalf.

[53 FR 197, Jan. 5, 1988, as amended at 62 FR 50791, Sept. 26, 1997]

§ 541.15 Initial hearing.

The Warden shall delegate to one or more institution staff members the authority and duty to hold an initial hearing upon completion of the investigation. In order to ensure impartiality, the appropriate staff member(s) (hereinafter usually referred to as the Unit Discipline Committee (UDC)) may not be the reporting or investigating officer or a witness to the incident, or play any significant part in having the charges referred to the UDC. However,

a staff member witnessing an incident may serve on the UDC where virtually every staff member in the institution witnesses the incident in whole or in part. If the UDC finds at the initial hearing that an inmate has committed a prohibited act, the UDC may impose minor dispositions and sanctions. When an alleged violation of Bureau rules is serious and warrants consideration for other than minor sanctions, the UDC shall refer the charges to the Discipline Hearing Officer for further hearing. The UDC must refer all greatest category charges to the DHO. The following minimum standards apply to initial hearings in all institutions.

(a) Staff shall give each inmate charged with violating a Bureau rule a written copy of the charge(s) against the inmate, ordinarily within 24 hours of the time staff became aware of the inmate's involvement in the incident.

(b) Each inmate so charged is entitled to an initial hearing before the UDC, ordinarily held within three work days from the time staff became aware of the inmate's involvement in the incident. This three work day period excludes the day staff became aware of the inmate's involvement in the incident, weekends, and holidays.

(c) The inmate is entitled to be present at the initial hearing except during deliberations of the decision maker(s) or when institutional security would be jeopardized by the inmate's presence. The UDC shall clearly document in the record of the hearing reasons for excluding an inmate from the hearing. An inmate may waive the right to be present at this hearing provided that the waiver is documented by staff and reviewed by the UDC. A waiver may be in writing, signed by the inmate, or if the inmate refuses to sign a waiver, it shall be shown by a memorandum signed by staff and witnessed by a second staff member indicating the inmate's refusal to appear at the hearing. The UDC may conduct a hearing in the absence of an inmate when the inmate waives the right to appear. When an inmate escapes or is otherwise absent from custody, the UDC shall conduct a hearing in the inmate's absence at the institution in which the inmate was last confined.

(d) The inmate is entitled to make a statement and to present documentary evidence in the inmate's own behalf.

(e) The Unit Discipline Committee may drop or informally resolve any Moderate or Low Moderate charge. The UDC shall expunge the inmate's file of the Incident Report if informal resolution is accomplished.

(f) The Unit Discipline Committee shall consider all evidence presented at the hearing and shall make a decision based on at least some facts, and if there is conflicting evidence, it must be based on the greater weight of the evidence. The UDC shall take one of the following actions:

(1) Find that the inmate committed the prohibited act charged and/or a similar prohibited act if reflected in the Incident Report;

(2) Find that the inmate did not commit the prohibited act charged or a similar prohibited act if reflected in the Incident Report; or

(3) Refer the case to the DHO for further hearing:

The UDC shall give the inmate a written copy of the decision and disposition by the close of business the next work day. Any action taken as a minor disposition is reviewable under the Administration Remedy Procedure (see part 542 of this chapter).

(g) The UDC shall prepare a record of its proceedings which need not be verbatim. A record of the hearing and supporting documents are kept in the inmate's file.

(h) When an alleged violation of Bureau rules is serious and warrants consideration for other than minor sanctions (G through P), the UDC shall refer the charge(s) without indication of findings as to commission of the alleged violation to the Discipline Hearing Officer (DHO) for hearing and disposition. The UDC shall forward copies of all relevant documents to the DHO with a brief statement of reasons for the referral along with any recommendations for appropriate disposition if the DHO finds the inmate has committed the act charged and/or a similar prohibited act. The inmate whose charge is being referred to the Discipline Hearing Officer may be retained in administrative detention or other restricted status, but the UDC

Bureau of Prisons, Justice

§ 541.17

may not impose a final disposition if the matter is being referred to the DHO.

(i) When charges are to be referred to the Discipline Hearing Officer, the UDC shall advise the inmate of the rights afforded at a hearing before the DHO. The UDC shall ask the inmate to indicate a choice of staff representative, if any, and the names of any witnesses the inmate wishes to be called to testify at the hearing and what testimony they are expected to provide. The UDC shall advise the inmate that the inmate may waive the right to be present at the Institution Discipline hearing, but still elect to have witnesses and/or a staff representative appear in the inmate's behalf at this hearing.

(j) When the Unit Discipline Committee holds a full hearing and determines that the inmate did not commit a prohibited act of High, Moderate or Low Moderate Severity, the UDC shall expunge the inmate's file of the Incident Report and related documents. The UDC must refer to the Discipline Hearing Officer all incidents involving prohibited acts of Greatest Severity.

(k) The UDC may extend time limits imposed in this section for a good cause shown by the inmate or staff and documented in the record of the hearing.

§ 541.16 Establishment and functioning of the Discipline Hearing Officer.

(a) Each Bureau of Prison institution shall have an independent hearing officer (DHO) assigned to conduct administrative fact-finding hearings covering alleged acts of misconduct and violations of prohibited acts, including those acts which could result in criminal charges. In the event of a serious disturbance or other emergency, or if an inmate commits an offense in the presence of the DHO, an alternate Discipline Hearing Officer will be appointed to conduct hearings with approval of the appropriate Regional Director. If the institution's DHO is not able to conduct hearings, the Warden shall arrange for another DHO to conduct the hearings. This person must be trained and certified as a DHO, and meet the other requirements for DHO.

(b) In order to insure impartiality, the DHO may not be the reporting officer, investigating officer, or UDC member, or a witness to the incident or play any significant part in having the charge(s) referred to the DHO.

(c) The Discipline Hearing Officer shall conduct hearings, make findings, and impose appropriate sanctions for incidents of inmate misconduct referred for disposition following the hearing required by § 541.15 before the UDC. The DHO may not hear any case or impose any sanctions in a case not heard and referred by the UDC. Only the Discipline Hearing Officer shall have the authority to impose or suspend sanctions A through F.

(d) The Warden at each institution shall designate a staff member, hereinafter called the Segregation Review Official (SRO), to conduct reviews of inmates placed in disciplinary segregation and administrative detention in accordance with the requirements of § 541.20 and § 541.22.

§ 541.17 Procedures before the Discipline Hearing Officer.

The Discipline Hearing Officer shall proceed as follows:

(a) The Warden shall give an inmate advance written notice of the charge(s) against the inmate no less than 24 hours before the inmate's appearance before the Discipline Hearing Officer unless the inmate is to be released from custody within that time. An inmate may waive in writing the 24-hour notice requirement.

(b) The Warden shall provide an inmate the service of a full time staff member to represent the inmate at the hearing before the Discipline Hearing Officer should the inmate so desire. The Warden, the DHO or alternate DHO, the reporting officer, investigating officer, a witness to the incident, and UDC members involved in the case may not act as staff representative. The Warden may exclude staff from acting as staff representative in a particular case when there is a potential conflict in roles. The staff representative shall be available to assist the inmate if the inmate desires by speaking to witnesses and by presenting favorable evidence to the DHO.